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ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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June 6, 2007

VIA FACSIMILE

The Honorable David M. Walker
Comptroller General
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW, Room 700
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Walker,

In the 109th Congress, this Committee looked extensively into the gang problem facing the greater D.C. region. We held field hearings in Northern Virginia and Prince George's County that examined how local, state, and federal law enforcement work together to combat street gangs. The issue of gangs in the United States, however, goes beyond discomfort in suburbia. I am equally concerned these gangs may be forming larger networks with known or potential links to drug trafficking, organized crime, and terrorist organizations.

One relatively new tool to fight this networking is the use of the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) to prosecute gang members. The Committee is interested in the success rate of RICO statute use for gang prosecutions in the larger populated cities and how their experiences can assist other regions in such prosecutions.

Another tool to combat gang violence is the formation of joint task forces, which typically include federal law enforcement representation from the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The Committee would like an assessment of how these agencies are collaborating with each other and state and local organizations.

Therefore, the Committee requests that GAO answer the following questions:

1. How, specifically, is the RICO statute currently being used to assist in gang prosecutions?
2. In what ways, if any, do the provisions of the RICO statute need modification to enhance it as a tool to use in prosecuting gang offenders?

3. What efforts have the FBI, DEA, ATF, and ICE undertaken to combat gang violence?
 - a. How clearly are the agency roles and responsibilities defined?
 - b. How do they coordinate their efforts?
4. How do the federal law enforcement agencies collaborate with state and local law enforcement agencies?
 - a. What have been the most significant challenges for federal law enforcement in working with state and locals?
 - b. What are some examples of the most significant positive results?
5. What are examples of innovative practices localities are using to battle gang violence that might be of use to other communities?
 - a. How did federal law enforcement assist in these innovative practices?
 - b. What more can federal law enforcement do to support these practices?

Thank you for your timely attention to this matter. If you have any questions, please contact [REDACTED] at: (202) 225-5074.

Sincerely,



Tom Davis
Ranking Minority Member

cc: The Honorable Henry A. Waxman, Chairman